

PASSING OF ONE OF THE LAST "LADIES OF THE SALON"

By JOSEPH L. C. CLARKE.

THEY disappear. It is the story of the world socially as well as in the matter of insects. But first of all they modify and then they disappear. One of the last of the "ladies of the salon," our only socialite, died last week, and one who was a world shaking and was now devastating Europe that so much was taken of it. And misadventure was made in the brief biographies that announced her passing away which brought a smile to many a face that the eyes were looking into the years and a distance back of the twentieth century.

One read that the Baroness de Bazas lay dead at the age of 63—a good ripe age for any lady; but when the lady must in that case have ceased growing older for some twenty years there should have been a gallant footnote to that effect. For you see the Baroness de Bazas was our old acquaintance Mrs. Frank Leslie, and all the king's horses and all the king's men could not make her entry into this world as late as 1851, as the aforesaid biographies would have it.

The matter of a lady's age may well be a moot matter unless it jars unconsciously with historic events. True, the events themselves in this case had been waded out of existence by a process of elimination, but their ghosts were abroad, and what more natural than that they should come in the grim way that ghosts have and sit around the sad casket—a queer crowd, too-looking wistfully down at the dim face that seemed in its calm so innocent of stirring experiences.

No doubt the mourners saw little of this. The literary and artistic habits of the Thursdays of Mrs. Frank Leslie, Baroness de Bazas, pondered more upon the fact that the goodly face, lined and solid that they were wont to consume on these halcyon evenings would be no more for them than that their social communities were at an end. Little they troubled about the date of the birth of their benefactress. For, alas, the worlds of literature or art to which they belonged were the worlds of Cain, Hone and Pilling Performance and the art pathways they trod led nowhere. In such cases a solid meal and a decent drink had a real meaning.

They looked back to the mental picture of the salon at its best, with the crown of gentle egotists moving to and fro in the comfortable room, hailing each other with a cheerfulness that was supposedly bon ton, saluting with as good an imitation of the grand manner as they could muster, and saying what things of flattery they could compose to the curious figure made to simulate a long departed youth which occupied a chair of state on a dais. It was a fantastic scene, a bit pathetic.

Under the mask of great age lay the traces of great beauty that could not be forgotten. Amid the inanities and surface smartness and the primping smiles that flashed at times from the figure in the chair bits of clear intuition and acute observation, making one feel that the most at the baronial humming and the learned pretence so tirelessly labored over and so assiduously larded out in a stream level with the flowing of the punch at the side. Of course it all was because the lady protagonist lived for admiration and was willing to pay a little for it.

Now and again a real sincerity would be gathered in. But did he or she ever suspect? One glance at the gathering was usually enough. If one lingered long enough one heard of the resurrection of the salon "right here in New York," and references to the glory days of Mme. Recamier and Mme. Edmond de la Roche and Mme. de la Roche.

And yet the celebrities made a mistake. A study of the scene and its attendant would have made fine material for a Balzac or a Thackeray with an eye for the rocco and human articles of vertu—taking themselves and their hostess seriously.

An Effort to Piece Together the Story of the Late Mrs. Frank Leslie's Fourscore Years of Management and Matrimony

And for years, with occasional intervals, it had gone on. There were veterans of the salon among them who looked in a kindly, superior way on the newcomers. And they all subscribed to the baronial myth and the reconstructed biography, and the story of a great fortune won and held for the good of her kind by the bediamonded figure in the chair. It was, in fact, a sorry salon, furnishing humors to the guests, and unable to furnish them with agreeable food. Yet, as it was apparently the last, the biography of the Baroness de Bazas should have some public value.

The trouble with Mrs. Leslie's biography is that it was so variously related to successive generations of the historian is a little confused by the contradictions as well as by the suppression. Here, for instance, is an apparently authorized statement that she was born in 1851, whereas it had long been conceded that she was first married in 1854. When apparently of late years, about to marry a Spanish Marquis, she was asked if he would not make the fifth of her husband's name. Her answer was "No," she said, "I am not a Marquis's daughter."

Her name originally was Miriam or Miriam Florence Pollin, and she saw the light in New Orleans in the early part of 1851. Her own story of her earliest days is full of contradictions. "I never had any childhood, for the word means sunshine and freedom from care. I had a starved and pinched little childhood, as far as love and merriment went," and two large tears stood in her soft gray eyes ornamental assertion by the teller of the story.

At any rate there was Miriam in New York at about 18 or 19—a very beautiful and talented girl. The authorized biography gives the information that she began to write for publication in her thirteenth year, so perhaps she made some attempt to earn a living by writing when she came north.

In certain earlier biographies it is set down that she married David Charles Peacock, who is believed to have been a jeweler in New York in 1854, and always the addition is made that the marriage was romantic and a failure, and at any rate that she divorced him after a very few years.

Described about this time she made a fine picture, which was true of her for many a year. Her eyes were large, lustrous orbs of a soft gray; her hair was a raven's mass of coppery gold. Her features, for all her fair skin, had an alluring Oriental cast. Her skin was delicately fine, and of an even mat color. Her neck, shoulders and bosom were exquisitely modeled. Her form was fairly shaped and sinuous in movement; her feet were small; her hands were thin, the least attractive thing about her was her eyes, which were infectious and altogether her presence and her address were most ingratiating.

About this time a certain Ephraim George Squier, who had won high repute in journalism, archeology and diplomacy and had carried on explorations for our government in Central America, "swam into her ken." Scholar, traveler, man of the world as he was he fell madly in love with Miriam. He had, it seems, a passion for fair women. And so they were married. Squier was sent on an official mission to Peru, and his beautiful bride went with him. They returned to New York in the following year, and set up house-keeping in Thirty-

eighth street, Mrs. Pollin, his wife's mother, keeping house for them. A book of hers at this time was "The Unexplored Regions of Central America." It is perhaps a rare book now. What share her husband had in it is unknown.

It may, however, be used as a somewhat narrow bridge over which the fair Egeria of the future was to cross the marriage line again.

Here the story becomes once more confused. An authorized biographer tells us that Miriam, or as she now preferred Leslie, began writing for the Frank Leslie publications. Frank Leslie, who, like so much in this story, was not Frank Leslie but Henry Carter, was born in London in 1818 and emigrated hither with a young English wife who bore him two sons, now bearing many names. Carter, or Leslie, as he called himself, had established Frank Leslie's Illustrated Paper in 1855 and pushed it to some success, adding other publications until they formed quite a bunch.

He employed many writers and artists of a cheap kind, some of them, however, young men like Thomas Nast, whom he paid starvation wages until some other publisher took them at large advances.

The lovely Mrs. Squier may well have been of the writers he employed. In one of Squier's absences on an archaeological mission Frank Leslie took up his abode in the Squier household. An authorized story of it was that Mrs. Pollin, being thrifty, desired to have a male boarder and advertised her want, and who should answer the advertisement but Frank Leslie? Such a thing to a Southern lady "surely meant damnation." It was in the stars.

Leslie was by way of being a swell in those days. He was rather coarse grained Englishman with a layer of thin deep elegance. What tired him of his gentle English wife, the mother of his children, one may not say now, but again like much of this story, he proclaimed that she was not his wife at all and proceeded to cast her off. He told her that she could not produce any evidence of their marriage.

She told in vain the story of her trust in him, their elopement, their hasty wedding in some town, some church that she could not recall. Pressed by him mercilessly she signed some paper—the villain in melodramas always entraps somebody with a paper—on which he was ranked before the world as the mistress, and father and grown up sons were estranged.

Things were going badly for poor Squier. He had some kind of job in Leslie's establishment, and his wife now had one also. But he was losing his grip. Then divorce papers were served on him. His much reputed better days, when he was a snuggler in the evening, he was now a snuggler in the morning. In 1871, on a back hall, he took himself to a snug corner in Greenwood. The discoverer of great monuments in distant climes cannot boast of much of a monument in his own.

Now, wedding bells, and a gorgeous lodging on the avenue for Mrs. Miriam Florence Peacock, Squier, Leslie or Carter, it was in 1874 that era began. She developed new qualities; became a business woman; went daily with Leslie to the office and ran the establishment down town. They kept a landau, and on fine afternoons she drove, decked in costly raiment, in Central Park and gathered diamonds. "For the first time," as she said, "she felt free and happy."

They took a trip to San Francisco, and she wrote "From Gotham to the Golden Gate." It was heyday for the beautiful Miriam. Then came a crash. The establishment ran into bankruptcy in 1877, and it was hard scrambling for Frank Leslie until he died suddenly in 1880.

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The courts and the creditors had put the firm's affairs in the hands of a very able, quiet, red-headed, red-haired man, Isaac N. England, publisher of The Sun, and by steady management he retrieved the position of the concern. Mrs. Leslie finally got it back, unembarrassed to some extent, but in good shape. Hereupon grew up another myth, namely the story "I did it all with my own little brains."

And now for a few years she once more enjoyed herself to the full. She always lived in hotels after that. It was of her cosy residence with a Mrs. Petre at the Hotel Wellington that she spoke of living in an attic on \$30 a month while she was building up the establishment after Mr. Leslie's death and the defeat of his disgruntled sons. The personal journalists sniffed her at every turn. Reading these effusions one might say of her with Boucicault, "sure your mother must have been Vainnes, and your father the Rank of England," so rich and beautiful she was. She talked of moving to Washington to found a salon there after the method of Mme. Edmond Adam.

Was it an echo of Lola Montes, whose old royal admirer had made her Countess of Lansfeld, that the love of grandeur now began to obsess her? She tried hard for society, but somehow—She became for a spell a devoted little church attendant, but yet—She made up her mind to reach for a title.

There was a certain good looking, stalwart, middle-aged and somewhat hairy Frenchman, calling himself the Marquis de Leuville, who laid violent siege to her heart, which capitulated. "He has given me a new sensation," she said, and that, though not conclusive of surrender to Cupid, was looked on as an achievement. Her cooler judgment, added by Mrs. Petre's reasoning, held her, however, in check, and she gave him his walking papers instead of her hand. Then, like so much of a contradictory nature in this narrative, it was charged that he had been regularly "promoted" by a London syndicate and was not a Marquis but the offspring of a tailor.

She went abroad. In London she was presented to Lady Wilde, the mother of Oscar. Lady Wilde, a woman of much force of character and a fine writer, had reached the mummified period, and held a salon in London. At her receptions daylight was carefully excluded and the freaks and geniuses of the English capital gathered there. Mrs. Leslie was impressed by the stately and curious old person. She came home with an idea. Incidentally she had met "Willie" Wilde, Oscar's six foot brother—probably by candlelight, for not long after he came to America he proposed for her hand and was joyously accepted.

Willie Wilde was 47 and she was nearing 60. This was in 1891. But Willie was a disappointment. He would not work. Her fond dream of her tall, good looking husband attending to business vanished before his unconquerable aversion to labor. So they were divorced in 1893.

Mrs. Leslie now leased her establishment to a syndicate and traveled, and on her return founded her salon, into which we have been privileged to take a glimpse. She did not let go her hope of a title. She sold out her property, name of Frank Leslie and all made. It is believed, a good sale. In 1903 she promised to bequeath her jewelry to the Warner Bros. Club. Will she have remembered?

One thing she had learned from her De Leuville experience, namely that any one almost can take up a title of nobility in America. How much better if you can find a real one that nobody is using. In a discarded derby, grown dusty on a back hall, he took himself to a snug corner in Greenwood. The discoverer of great monuments in distant climes cannot boast of much of a monument in his own.

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Mrs. Frank Leslie.

legre, who was a little over 60, had consented, it seems, to become her husband. She got up a great trousseau and was about to sail when word came that he had had the bad taste to die. She told the reporters all about it with many signs of regret.

Now in August, four years ago, the Baroness returned from Europe bringing with her on the St. Paul a Spanish seraglio, whom she introduced as Rosalia Villaverde, daughter of the late

Marquis. Does it not recall the story, true or not, of the kindness of Lola Montes to the beautiful young Miriam? There is no ascertainable moral. She was a bird who loved ex-patience—like her first choice in matrimony. It was perhaps in unconscious irony that there were four Wrens among her honorary paladins—all relatives. There will not be great pickings, but it makes an entertaining if not very logical story. Peace to Egeria!

SECY BRYAN ENJOYS OUTDOOR WEEK AT ASHEVILLE--NEWS OF AUTUMN RESORTS

ASHEVILLE, N. C., Sept. 26. Secretary of State and Mrs. William Jennings Bryan's stay at Grove Park last week was spent in the open, either tramping through the autumn woods or motorizing on the mountain roads. Several hours each day Mr. Bryan spent in cutting up firewood in the forest around Blue Ridge in Sunset Mountain. His object was exercise, but the wood will be used to burn in the great open fireplaces at the Inn when the chilly weather comes on. The only social affairs marking their stay were the informal dinner parties. The evening they were guests at a dinner given by Mrs. Bryan and Mr. De W. Frazier, widow of the Federal millionaire.

A trip was made to Blount on Tuesday by the Bryan party, who took a motor ride by special permit over the Vanderbilt estate. An informal reception was tendered Mr. Bryan and Mrs. Bryan by the Duke of Blount and on Wednesday morning last he made the only formal talk of the week's visit when he addressed the national convention of insurance commissioners of the United States, who were in annual meeting here.

Quite a bit of excitement was caused recently among the guests at Grove Park by the loss and mysterious reappearance of a black pearl pendant surrounded by diamonds and set in a ring, the property of Mrs. Henry M. Frazier, who is spending the autumn season here. Mrs. Frazier said she felt the pin fall in the dining room while she was at dinner, but a thorough search failed to reveal it. Later detectives were engaged and various attempts made to locate the jewel.

Mr. and Mrs. William Grosvenor of Rhode Island and the Newport villa colony are among the most prominent of the recently arrived bright couples. The Grosvenors were Miss Mary Burnett of Southboro and the wedding was an event of interest on September 16 in that city, when the bride's stepfather, the Bishop of New Hampshire, performed the ceremony.

Mr. and Mrs. Harold Ross of Cedarhurst, L. I., were guests at dinner before the dance of the Mrs. H. M. Frazier, other members of the little party being Miss Rita Rees and Mrs. Kevan of Wilmington. Miss Dupont of New York, Mr. and Mrs. Augustus Shepley of Long Island, Mr. Bernard of New York, Harold Alsop of Washington, Miss Margaret Casey, Miss Viola Johnston and Mrs. Emory Winslow of Macon, Mrs. C. S. McDonald of New Orleans, M. C. Paul of Philadelphia, Mr. and Mrs. H. S. Scarborough of Chicago, Mrs. Kettig and Miss Kettig of Birmingham were other guests at the dinner dance.

been announced this week. The handicap golf tournament for men begins on October 3, and the championship tournament for women on October 12, both to be played on the links of the Asheville Country Club, which lies directly in front of Grove Park Inn. The tennis courts of the Inn have been completed this week and electric lights are being installed so that games may be played at the evening hours.

Mr. and Mrs. George Russell of Southampton are among the arrivals at Grove Park Inn. Mr. and Mrs. William C. Neill of Philadelphia arrived Tuesday to spend some time here, and Mr. and Mrs. De W. Frazier, widow of the Federal millionaire, are recent guests.

Mrs. E. D. Hoffman and M. C. Paul of Philadelphia came in this week to spend the autumn season here. Mr. and Mrs. W. H. Kennedy of Buffalo, N. Y., are among the arrivals. Mr. and Mrs. J. D. Emory Speer, the distinguished Georgia jurist, and Mrs. Speer, who are making a second visit to the Inn this season. The Rev. and Mrs. R. C. Morgan of London, England, arrived Monday for a short stay.

The autumn season in the White Mountains, thanks to the wonderful weather and balmy days, has been a most successful one. The number of society people into the hills and many hotels are keeping open later than usual, following the example of the Mount Washington at Bretton Woods, which will not close until October 19. The golf links are in prime condition and the motor roads were never better.

and Mrs. William Hitt, entertained at the Cave Grill on Sunday evening in honor of the S. R. Hitts, who left by motor for Poland Sunday. Mr. and Mrs. Hitts, who have been at the Crawford House, is leaving for New York this week. Mr. Barron and Miss Eugenia Kelly have been riding daily. Mrs. Edward Kelly and Mr. Kelly returned at the Crawford several days longer. Lady Hope and Jay Emmet Dealey of New York have left the Crawford to spend some time in Jackson.

Mrs. Moses Hopkins, who is entertaining Mr. and Mrs. George Hopkins, Mr. and Mrs. John F. O'Brien and Mrs. Lawrence Hamill at her cottage in Franconia Notch, entertained them at a motor ride to North Woodstock on Monday.

The fall season at the Maplewood Hotel at Maplewood, N. H., has just commenced in good earnest. The weather during the opening week has been better than at any time since June.

A. H. Cilley, the manager of the hotel, in order to fully accommodate the great amount of mountain travel, has made arrangements to keep the hotel open until October 1.

ing and in the evening the onestep, hesitation and other up to date dances are popular with the guests.

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town well oiled and in perfect condition. Visitors will find many points of interest adjacent to the resort. The canoeing and boating on Lake Umbagog is one of the popular diversions, and the largest poultry farm in the world, Laurens Farm, is also a point of interest.

Miss Julie Tilford of New York, an entertaining figure. The wireless plant at Tuckerton and the State game preserve at the same place, only a short distance from Lakewood, are also popular motor runs.

The golf course of the Lakewood Country Club is in perfect condition and many golfers are spending every day in preparation for the fall handicaps and the Thanksgiving Day tournament.

Some of the cottage colony who have arrived and opened their winter homes at Lakewood are: Mr. and Mrs. W. W. Wilcock of Pittsburgh returned from Southampton and opened Lakewood; Mr. and Mrs. Jasper Lovell returned from Spring Lake to Lynx Hall; Mr. and Mrs. F. A. Bots of New York, Mr. and Mrs. Charles Lathrop, Pack returned from Lakewood to Lathrop Hall; Mr. and Mrs. H. B. Heard, Mr. and Mrs. Walter Ross, Hyman, the Misses Burke, Mr. J. W. Morey and Mrs. Kate Hubler. Dr. and Mrs. J. H. Hubler.

Preparations are being made to entertain the largest crowd that Lakewood has ever catered to. The Palmer House, which was closed for several seasons, is being rebuilt and will be managed by Miss Doherty, and the Lakewood Hotel will be opened by a new owner, Nathan Jacobson, next month.

George Fales Baker of Philadelphia will come to Lakewood from Rosemont, Pa., and open the estate "Edgemoor," next week. Mr. and Mrs. Arthur E. Whitely will return here within a few days. Mr. and Mrs. Francis D. Host and Miss Hope Palmer will return from Lenox and open Pinehurst early next month.

At a recent meeting of the directors of the Lakewood Hotel and Land Association, members of the Laurel Hotel, David B. Plumer, who manages the Hotel Green of Pasadena, Cal., and the new Essex and Sussex at Spring Lake, was elected director of the company.

The local Y. W. C. A. will open a physical department on October 1 for the athletically inclined young ladies of the resort. This institution has been heavily endowed by Miss Martha Johnson of Pittsburgh and is one of the best equipped buildings in the State.

The Central Railroad of New Jersey has made a contract with the Lakewood Hotel and Land Association to control all "baggage" and baggage at the station. This will do away with the annoyance which prevailed when visitors arrived at Lakewood by the Central Railroad.

Chaplain A. J. Bader of the United States army, accompanied by his brother, F. J. Bader of New York, is stopping at the Oak Court Hotel.

Peck, Agnes O'Gorman, Hilah and Mercer French, Alice Chambers, Taylor Townsend, James McDonald, Princess Paul Troubetzkoy and Mrs. Arthur Carroll.

Many who are arriving for the fall season have made the trip from New York or other points in motors, while others have brought their cars for use during their stay. Mrs. Frank I. Norton of Coonovia, who came with Mr. and Mrs. Huntington Norton, made the trip in her car and found the roads in excellent condition.

Some of those entertaining at dinner this week included Senator and Mrs. Gilbert M. Hitchcock, Senator and Mrs. James A. O'Gorman, Mrs. Townsend Ashmore, Mr. and Mrs. Charles M. Hewitt, Mr. and Mrs. M. J. Wentworth, Mr. and Mrs. W. L. Green and Mrs. Jacob Frinzy.

DELAWARE WATER GAP. Autumn at the Delaware Water Gap is the most delightful season of the entire year. The nights are cool, the mornings are bright and frosty, and the water is soft, balmy air which belongs to the dreamy days of Indian summer.

In this crisp autumn air outdoor sports become doubly enjoyable and the participants take on a new lease of life. Horseback riding, automobile and mountain climbing acquire an added charm. The pleasure of a stroll is greatly enhanced by the chance to gather chestnuts, for the ground under hundreds of nut laden trees is literally strewn with the little glossy brown nuts.

During the summer season at the Gap golf and tennis have attracted to this section some of the best known national experts in these sports, and with the advent of autumn there doesn't seem to be any abatement to the enthusiasm over these favorite sports, either on the Shavonne or Caddico courses.

Interesting dates for golf events have been announced this week. The handicap golf tournament for men begins on October 3, and the championship tournament for women on October 12, both to be played on the links of the Asheville Country Club, which lies directly in front of Grove Park Inn. The tennis courts of the Inn have been completed this week and electric lights are being installed so that games may be played at the evening hours.